

Sprague's Pipit
1 May 1977
Ryan, Delaware Co., IA
*unknown
Halmi 1977

Record Number: 81-DC
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

anonymous [sent in by Lillian Serbousek]

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Tom Kent to Records Committee, 13 Sep 1993

REFERENCE

Field Reports: IBL 47:61

VOTE (1981): 5-III, 2-IV

IV, good description, but observer not known.

III, ask Lillian who saw it.

IV, documented apparently second hand. Observer unkn.

Description consistent with Sprague's, but not conclusive. Was it a pipit?

REVOTE RC 1981 5-III, 2-IV

III, Sounds convincing. Reluctant to accept without name of observer, but Serbousek knows him.

IV, doc. fits but was probably not written at time of sighting (otherwise III). Call notes fit published descriptions.

III, learn name of obs. one obs.

III, Prob. correct, but rather hazy circumstances. Surely the observer can be tracked down (the 'keen-eyed teenage').

Description seems good.

REVOTE (1993): 1 A-D, 6 NA

A-D, Is it really so important to know the observers name? It would be nice to know how long after the sighting this was written, and what sources were used in the meantime. Good description gives the impression that the observer was aware of confusion with sparrows and water pipit.

NA, I can't bring myself to accept a record from an unknown or anonymous observer.

NA, Streaks on sides is vague. Does this mean flanks? No mention of crown or cheek description. Legs described as flesh color, this is not yellow enough in my view.

NA, Streaks on sides a problem; possibly the thinner billed western race of Vesper Sparrow. Too many inconsistencies and questions for acceptance.

NA, Voice and flight pattern most compelling part of description. Date OK. Field marks fit Vesper Sparrow and tend to exclude Sprague's, which has scalloped upperparts (not streaked) and lacks streaking on sides (flanks). No description of face pattern. Unknown observer and date of writing unknown.

...
birds and names assigned and called of birds
very well.

L. Serbrouse

#14

81-DC

Sprague's Pipit

May 1, 1977

- 7 miles N.E. of Ryan - 5 miles S.W. of Delhi
on plowed corn field adjacent to hayfields and pasture ^{and} Horned Larks
- seen with Water Pipits, Vesper Sparrow and Golden Plover
- looked quite similar to Vesper Sparrow - white outer tail feathers, buffy above and streaked, white below with streaks on breast & sides (couldn't see bill well at this distance)
- at close range - light flesh colored legs, could see no rusty at band of wing, central tail feathers were quite dark, close enough to see bill was long and slender (like Vesper's pushed down and forward) also was pinkish and dark at tip (lower mandible was lightest) was sure it wasn't a Water Pipit because of streaked back, breast coloration and leg coloration
- bird walked and ran, Savannah and Vesper Sparrow that were also on the ground hopped, flight was undulating and was more graceful compared to low buzzy flights of the two sparrows, the wings appeared pointed and long (as a whole the bird looked more slender)
not as vocal as the Water Pipits; notes were higher and thinner (1 syllable instead of two) than Water Pipits

Halmi, N. S. 1977. Field reports. Iowa Bird Life 47:58-63 p 61

"A keen-eyed teenager observed and well documented a Sprague's Pipit seen May 1 near Ryan (fide LS); unfortunately the name was not communicated, so he has an IOU from the IOU". LS = Lilian Serbousek